

Tuesday, October 31, 2006

News Nuggets

Student Honest and Ethical Behavior: The Road to Politics (Perdition) or Spin City?

A recent survey raises the possibility that our nation's young people lie and cheat and steal in greater numbers, now, more than ever before. Worse, these survey data show that our cynical young citizens feel no remorse for such behavior, or worse, accept such behavior as "normal" in business and life. These young people also think that they are ethical and moral, despite admitting to cheating, lying and other dishonesties. Link the Josephson The Ethics of American Youth Biennial Report What is happening here? "Young people are almost unanimous in saying that ethics and character are important on both a personal level and in business but they express a very cynical attitudes about whether a person can be ethical and succeed." (Source: <http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/reportcard/>)

Note: Since this election season spotlights our elected officials, I wonder if cynicism stemming from the antics (and scandals) of our trusted elected officials has anything to do with these survey results. Other Hallmarks of the Report The Josephson Report finds that today's students... Place high important on character and trust

Believe that ethics in the workplace is essential

Believe that being good is more important the being rich

State that adults in their lives provide positive role models Sounds too good to be true, so far...

These young people also state that they are satisfied with their character and they state that they believe that they are ethical. The Rest of the Story During this same survey... "82% admit they lied to parent within the past 12 months about something significant— 57% said they lied two or more times

62% admit they lied to teacher within the past 12 months about something significant -- 35% said they lied two or more times

33% copied an internet document within the past 12 months – 18% did so two or more times

60% cheated during a test at school within the past 12 months— 35% did so two or more times

23% stole something from a parent or other relative within the past 12 months – 11% did so two or more times

In 2002...

28% admitted stealing from a parent or other relative

19% stole something from a friend within the past 12 months – 7% did so two or more times

28% stole something from a store within the past 12 months – 14% did so two or more times "On first glance, the self-reports of our students seem to indicate worsening values and worsening behavior. But, is the Situation so Bad? On the other side of this issue (or maybe it is the other side of the spin), one college newspaper cites the similar data, and notes that the trends are positive.

Here are the campus headlines from Georgia Tech: "Integrity survey shows rise in student honesty" Link to the campus article about the increase in students integrity and the campus honor code... And this campus paper has been around since 1911! Are they or Aren't They? So, which is it? Are our young people becoming moral degenerates or noble citizens?

Are our students getting worse, or are they getting more honest in their self-reporting behavior?

Instead of drumming up the usual caveats and disclaimers about the ability to generalize from the one-time snapshot obtained from a survey, let's ask one question...

Has human nature evolved or deteriorated much in the past three, seven or ten years, fifty or one hundred years?

No, but social norms seem to evolve a bit faster. For example, the content of television programs today would not have been allowed 40 years ago. Does this observation indicate that our society degenerated, and is skiing down the slippery slope toward unbridled moral depravity?

More likely, the sludge on television indicates a shrinking customer base, and the need for television executives to provide ever more salacious, sexy, violent and action-packed programming to bring eyeballs in front of the tube with ever more channels and program choices.

Of course, this strategy won't pan out in the long run, because customers will continue leaving passive television watching in droves in favor of the interaction and dynamic content of the Internet (and interactive video games). The Lesson for Schools Incidents, such as the spate of recent school violence are exceptions, but every incident and foiled attempt at notoriety are pumped world-wide at electron speed.

What school districts should recognize, and what every master teacher (from ancient to modern) exemplified, is that imagination, interaction, , and creative interactivity whip the results and positive outcomes from passive learning, hands down.

There is no need to be discourages or distracted by negative headlines and scary headlines.

Teachers who look for and see the positive qualities that reside in each student will always draw out that best. Master teachers motivate students to become life-long learners and life-long productive citizens.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in News Nuggets at 11:00

Short Article

Parents: Political Allies or a Subversive, Detrimental Force in Education? You choose!

Almost all parents send their children to school.

Most parents cart or ship their kids off to school each morning because lots of positive benefits accrue to their children throughout their children's lives, and throughout their children's world-of-work careers. More than a few parents also send children to school because the schools provide free babysitting, and often, free meals.

Some parents send their children to school because doing so is the law.

And a few parents begrudge any time that their children spend at school. Some take their loathing, fear, or religious fervor so far as to keep their children home and going through the motions of "providing an education" at home, i.e., "Home Schooling." (Question: "Homeschooling" Oxymoron or not?) Sidebar The reason that parents are doing a disservice to their children by sheltering them with home schooling is fodder for exploration in another newsletter article. But briefly, the reason that most home-schooled children "loose out" is the same reason that studying a "foreign" language only from books and CDs is nowhere near as effective as studying with real people. Case in point: All the Japanese who study "American" (They think it is English). What they discover is that a mispronounced vocabulary serves up only "culture shock" when they arrive on our shores. The reason: "American" is a "culture," not a language. Support to Loose!

But, for most parents, the support for their children's teachers is "for the teacher to loose." Teachers normally inherit trust and respect when a child enrolls in their classroom.

Teachers, however, can destroy this natural good will.

Keeping in parents' good graces is tremendously easier than earning it back again!

An analogy: Imagine how many folks return to a used car lot (or even another store of any type), Website, laundromat, or even a public park...if their initial experience is negative. Grudge-carrying people return to venues associated with "bad" experiences only when they have no choice.

Grudge-carrying parents send their children to the schools after being aversively conditioned (generally by less-than-diplomatic teacher), too. But, these children now carry a "License to Wreck Havoc", granted by the disgruntled parent. Unlike the cheated, insulted, outraged used car buyer, the children are captive of their classrooms, and each day festers additional negative emotion and negative self-talk.

Disgruntled parents only send their children back to an antagonistic teacher's classroom because they have no choice. (Hint: The current school is often the only realistic choice, and many campuses refuse to transfer students to another classroom without an educational rationale.) Few parents have the resources to relocate their children to another school. Captive "customers" simmer in ill will and an antagonistic mood. Teachers held "Over a Barrel"? Actually, no.

Diplomatic skills exhibited by teachers does not mean a "The Patron is Always Right" doormat policy.

Rather, the frame of mind of diplomatic teachers needs to be, "The partner (parent) is always worth listening to and negotiating with..."

Teachers who only deal with members of the teacher's "fan club" and ignore the rest miss a great opportunity.

Teachers who view their opportunity to communicate with, negotiate with, and correspond with parents...as one of the best resources in the education of their students...win out. These teachers win over most of the parents of their children.

The "80 / 20 Rule" applies in dealing with parents.

Normal communication efforts and a little effort (the 20%) is sufficient positive public relations for 80% of your students' parents. But, this is not "good enough."

Positive relationships with only 80% of your students' parents is Poorly Performing Schools In poorly performing schools, or in schools where the teacher fails to manage classroom discipline correctly, the parents perform the majority of the teaching that occurs for their child (children) in the guise of "homework." Sidebar One of the few occasions when drill and practice homework (for "reinforcement" is justified is when there is an ineffective teacher. There are so many productive activities that creative teachers can assign instead. Assignments that engage and energize students, not bore them with repetition.

Come to think of it, maybe assigning lots of "skill and reinforcement drill" may be a leading indicator of an ineffective teacher.

Comments anyone? Leadership Skills Teachers need to invite parents to become members of their children's "Teaching Team." And, teachers need to mean this, believe this, "psych" themselves if they have to until this becomes true.

If time and effort were money that a teacher invested, the highest payoff and return on this investment would be made by investing in partnering with parents. Partnering with parents builds sweat equity in a "Mutual Fund" of lifelong benefits for your students.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Short Article at 10:00

Feature Article

Zen and the Art of Classroom Management

Classroom management can be balanced, insightful, mindful and effective...leading to harmony, happiness and peace of mind. Classroom management can be conflictive and confrontational, such as a martial arts sparring match...or, smooth and graceful, flowing and dynamic...like a Tai Chi exercise session.

Teacher mind set, i.e., attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, cognitions, ideals, images and self-talk; to name a few components, are the key to classroom management success.

Of course your definition of "success" is important, too. Examine first the "Culture" of your classroom management approach. Strange question? Stop and consider that culture is the lens through which we perceive "Right and Wrong"...In...English and Italian, the child is "Bad" "Be good," implies that the child was "bad" French, the child is "Imprudent, Silly"

"Be wise" implies that the child was "foolish, imprudent or silly" Scandinavian and Jewish, the child is "Unfriendly" "Be friendly" implies that the child was "unfriendly, acting un-nice, lacking in hospitableness" German, the child is "Out of Step" "Out of step" implies that the child was "not marching to the correct drummer, out of line" Spanish, the child is "Not showing good manners, not behaving appropriately" "Pórtate bien, no seas mal educado" implies that the child is "behaving badly or is not well mannered" Hopi Language, the child is "Not following the Hopi way" "No, no, no, that's not the Hopi way." implies that the child is "not living up to the Hopi tradition" The Master Teacher The master teacher recognizes that any one of these cultural labeling strategies is detrimental to building rapport with students, so the master teacher avoids any phrases that "devalue and deflate" students. The master teacher says, "We don't do that here." "We don't do that here," implies "Try another way." "Try another way" suggests that improvement is needed without affixing blame (and a negative evaluation) upon the student. Sidebar Many students carry enough negative evaluation baggage about themselves to keep themselves depressed for years, and they do not need additional reminders about their resident low self-concept, or reminders from their teachers about their limited and dimly lit self-esteem.

A master teacher focuses upon students' successes, and a master teacher centers thought and action upon positive outcomes. A master teacher looks forward to improvements, and glances backward at mistakes only long enough to show students how avoiding such behavior leads to success and personal payoffs in the future.

A master teacher communicates acceptance of each student, and avoids hinting that the teacher might harbor a hidden, condescending view of the child.

The rule is: "the more uncooperative, unfriendly, belligerent, hostile and noncompliant the child appears to be; the longer and more sensitive the child's antennae (that are tuned to picking up slights and slurs)" become.

Other Lenses for Viewing Behavior

Practitioners of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) observe that all behavior is motivated by a desire for positive outcomes.

Of course, the goals and methods for generating these positive outcomes may be different than other people's goals and objectives, i.e., the street-wise students goals and methods may differ from the upper-middle class ethics...lower-middle class economic values of the teacher.

"What's the difference between lying to get elected and picking people's pockets through crooked lobbyist, and lying to sell them junk, or picking their pockets on a busy street?" the young thug asks.

The master teacher establishes rapport with each student, and frames the motivation to cooperate and learn in terms that resonate with each students.

Note: "One motivational phrase does not fit all."

Practice a Zen Attitude

Keeping a caring, but detached attitude and holding a belief in the innate value, dignity and importance of each student firmly in mind results in a day to day teaching experience that is characterized by...Agility Attention Attunement to both Overt and Subtle Communication Balance Calm Flexibility Intuition Mercy Patience Responsiveness Success for Each Student's Sake

Reigning in your "jumping to conclusions" horse, "keeping the hounds of blame" at bay, implementing a "Discovery before Remedy" strategy pay off in peace, happiness and success.

Pondering profusely before mobilizing a power struggle or waging a campaign of personal domination against any student. Classroom warfare is not an art, it is a dirty, grisly, repugnant business, a business capable of producing no profitable outcome for anyone.

Introspect now, and discover a more enlightened way to manage your classroom.

Feel, believe, receive and imagine the harmony and success that you desire as though it already graces your life in the classroom. The stronger and more vividly that you create (and hold to) these mental pictures, the more thoroughly you make intuitive decisions and intuitive statements that bring your mental intentions into reality.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Featured Article at 09:00

Quick Tips

Mnemonics: A Lost Art in Classroom Presentations

All teachers know about mnemonics (even if they have to refer to a dictionary to spell the word correctly). But, how many teachers use a mnemonic-based strategy during each classroom presentation to help students remember information. A "Bad Rap" for Memorizing But, memorizing has taken an undeserved broadside hit, aimed at "senseless, mindless, mind-dulling drill" .

But, is learning a memorizing skill such as the how-to of using mnemonic devices useless?

Not when students could focus for 30 seconds and remember assignments, assignment due dates, lists for oral presentations, formulas, steps in the scientific method and other key bits of information.

The Basis of Mnemonics

There are three components of mnemonics: Attention

Imagery

Organization

Association is the basic skills for using mnemonic device for learning. And, association is the basic skill for collecting and chunking information. Association, at least creating associations that other people haven't made the connection with, is one component of creativity.

So, how many ways can you use mnemonics in your classroom. Answer: Well just about as many creative ways that you can devise to make your classroom presentations more riveting, exciting, memorable, creative, attention-grabbing. What will you Come up with Next? Keeping your students guessing is a great device for keeping your students paying attention.

Novel, unique, imaginative items are remembered. Remember the teacher who emerged from the rest room with toilet paper streaming from the collar of her blouse? Well, everybody else remembers, too. Vividly. An incident such as this demonstrates "one trial learning," and it was effective. But, made up images like this, when attached to important facts create "instant impact" learning.

If our minds have this ability, why do we push the less than effective, "repeat the words over and over to yourself" method of memorizing? Sweep the Mental Cobwebs Besides exaggerated, contorted, memorable images; a mnemonic device requires mental organization.

Take a simple mnemonic list builder. Images are associated with numbers, like, for example...

#1 - Pencil

#2 - Duck

#3 - Split-Bent Bagel

#4 - Upside Down Chair

#5 - Coat Hook

#6 - Golf Club

#7 - Big Nose

#8 - Ice Skater's Figure Eight

#9 - Ram's Horn

Notice that the key words have a similar shape to the number. (The first association.)

Now put the mnemonic device into practice. For example:

Let's remember the names of the Five Great Lakes.

Remember "H-O-M-E-S" Our homes are on the five Great Lakes. H - Huron

O - Ontario

M - Michigan

E - Erie

S - Superior

But, what about the names themselves? #1: Huron - Imagine a huge, stork-like bird with a bill shaped like a pencil, poking a equally large fish

#2: Imagine a duck eating a tire made of Cheerios (On-tire-E-O)

#3: Michigan - The number 3 looks like the letter "M" when turned one way, and the Letter "E" when turned another way. These are the initials for the great sports star (quarterback, pitcher, hurdle jumper, ping pong player and Sumo wrestler - Mich Egan.

#4: Erie - It is a dark and stormy night, and the girls have climbed on a chair in fear of the erie sounds that screech and moan from the spirits of shipwrecks on the lake

#5: Superior - The "Hook-Shaped Letter S" is huge and big enough to lift a smart-mouthed, Superman (who thinks that he is superior to everyone else) up by the seat of the pants You get the idea...

Interesting images, students paying attention, a rational structure to prompt the recall.

A couple of minutes of "change-of-pace fun" to brighten up an otherwise humdrum, lackluster school day. (Just kidding!)

But the greatest benefit: You don't have to spend much time planning these. And, even better, involve students in creating the images and associations.

What about a Mnemonics Department in your classroom, or what about "hiring" a Mnemonics student helper, with higher rank and importance than the line monitor or door and lights off monitor?

How about a Mnemonics Club for any of you lucky enough to teach in a neighborhood school?

Your opportunities to use this easy to implement mental device are far greater than the simple components of the

technique.

Use the technique today, tomorrow at the latest. Keep using it. Measure improvements in learning and measure improvements in your students' attitudes.

OK. Do you remember what you are going to do?

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Quick Tips at 08:00

Top Tips

How to do More in Less Time: Why do More when Doing Less gets Better Results?

Each day you are faced with "loud, noisy, squeaking-wheel, endless" urgent tasks, and you have a few "quiet, uncomplaining, whispering" priorities that you set aside. You labor and struggle to quell the hoards of urgent demands, and your priorities become second-hand orphans, begging for another bowl of kindness and attention.

The secret of doing more in less time is attending to the priorities, and devising ways to delegate, eliminate or delay those clamoring, urgent tasks. Prioritized To-Do Lists Don't Work. Guess what? Making "To Do" lists and renumbering the tasks each day does not work. This approach wastes time. And this less than useful strategy only adds more urgent tasks to your list.

The only way that Prioritized To-Do Lists work is if you can block off a period of time during your workday and ensure that no interference will break you away from working on your top priority task.

Teachers find none of this discretionary time in their schedule, and other folks (on up the "school district chain-of-command") find such time even more scarce, possibly such time is extinct for them. Sidebar Corporate Chief Executive Officers (CEO's), the kind that receive millions per year (even hundreds of millions per year) in cash, bonuses, stock options and prizes) are lucky if they can carve out 90 minutes per work day for this kind of luxury time.

If corporate CEO's can't get this focused time, why would you believe that a teacher could have it? This kind of time is a "myth." A Strategy that Really Works. Planning and Project Management are Strategies that really work, but only if you identify what has to be done.

There are two kinds of tasks that you are looking for: Repeating tasks: Call these tasks as "Management, Monitoring and Maintenance Tasks"

One time jobs that won't repeat: Call these "Projects" Here is the secret for repeating tasks: automate them as much as possible.

Here is the secret for projects: Break them down into 15 minute steps. Other Secrets of Doing More in Less Time Act on as much of the trivia that crosses your palms.

Open your mail in the mail room, and trash most, reply now, and have a system for where to put the rest when you return to your classroom

Keep Inter Department Mail Envelopes in your mailbox

If you have one or more recipients for Inter department Mail, print a page or two of mailing labels, so you don't have to address the envelopes

Keep your planning in one place

Whether paper based or electronic, whether a Three-Ring Binder with your own photocopied pages, or an expensive, leather, preprinted forms...pick one method and use that method exclusively

Link to our free eBook (with lesson planning forms in the Appendices)

Link to a printable planner form...

Have a place for everything and keep everything in its place.

If you finish with something, put it back where it belong

If you collect papers, place them immediately in the correct sorting folder

Have students sort papers, Scantron's; quiz forms, tests, etc...by assignment, in alphabetical order within your sorting folders

When entering grades into electronic form (spreadsheet, gradebook program), get someone to recite the grades to you. (This gets the grades entered in one quarter the time it takes to do the task by yourself)

Take frequent breaks. You will accomplish more if you change your mental pace at least every 45 minutes to an hour.

Then, return to your tasks refreshed. And Remember the 80/ 20 Rule As you streamline your schedule, automate recurring tasks, and complete priority projects, remember that even priority tasks can be eliminated.

Find those tasks that provide the highest payoff for the amount of work that they require. These are the tasks that require only 20% of the effort to produce 80% of the results that you want.

Then, find ways to rid yourself of the tasks that take 80% of your effort, but yield only 20% of the results that you want.

The final skill for you to develop in your quest to do less and achieve more, "Learn how to say, No!"

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Top Tips at 07:00

Teacher Resources

Give Kids Good Schools: A Site for this Election Season

"Give Kids Good Schools" is a political and "Advocative" (A Classroom Toolkit Coined Word: Meaning: Advocate and Provocative) resource. The Give Kids Good Schools organization held a "Give Kids Good Schools Week" earlier this month, and they are already gearing up for the same event next year.

But, with the midterm election barreling down upon us, a week away from "Halloween Trick or Treat" (the timing seems quite appropriate and fitting this year), the Give Kids Good Schools site offers a great political current events resource. A Streamlined "Elected Officials" Contact System Give Kids Good Schools offers E-mail and other contact information so that you can take action and communicate your concerns at about the only time of the year that elected officials really field your communication efforts.

But, use E-mail instead of calling by their offices by telephone since most of these "public servants" are tying up their telephone lines with those dunning, outgoing campaign calls that interrupt your family's dinner and wake you up just as you fall asleep. Sidebar (Actually, this can't be true (Halloween Trick!), since no public servant would do such a blatantly illegal thing such as use your tax dollars to feather their own nest for another term of office, would they? (I'll have to check with congressional ethics consultant, Jack Abramoff on that one, as soon as he gets out of jail.)

The Give Kids Good Schools Site

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools .Org site

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools Week Campaign

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools "Find and Contact your Elected Officials" Resource

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools "Ten Questions to Ask Elected Officials" Resource

Link to the Give Kids Good Schools "Sign the Pledge" Page

Check up on your school or district with the School Matters .Com site (Courtesy of Standard and Poor's) [Answer: Standards are Poor (No pun intended)] Ready for Next Year? Give Kids Good Schools is already gearing up for Give Kids Good Schools Week 2007.

Why don't you, your students, and your students' parents join them?

And, while you're at it, why don't you all ask your elected officials "Why walking the talk support for education" is so very difficult once they win an election. Extra Credit! Here are some math problems and Web Quests that are appropriate for this "Trick and Treat/ Election Season"

Math How many jailed congressmen were also lawyers or judges? Create a Venn diagram to show the relationship.

A congressman takes \$100,000 from a lobbyist for allowing the clear cutting of a National Forest, and \$50,000 from another lobbyist for allowing cattle to graze for free on grass land that used to be a National Forest. Which lobbyist bought a vote? Which lobbyist got the best value for his money? Formula Writing A freshman congressman is invited to 700 swank parties a year. Two parties were scheduled last night. Write an apology letter from the congressman to the lobbyist holding the party that was not attended, explaining all the reasons that the lobbyists should still "contribute" the money.

Write a complaint letter to the president stating that his request for a 50% cut of the gate receipts for the "\$1,000 a plate dinner" is too high. Document why even a 25% share is too much money for the value of the service the president renders in bringing rich influence brokers to the table.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Book Review

Habits of Mind

Author: Fine, Melinda ISBN: 0-7879-0061-3 Format: Hardcover Pub. Date: 1995 Publisher: San Francisco: Jossey Bass
Pages: 225 Cost: \$40.00 (List) Available: Amazon ™ at as low as \$40 (new) - \$0.29 (Used) at eBay ™ \$30 (new) and \$5 (used)

Subtitle: Struggling Over Values in America's Classrooms The Books' Topics: A Confrontive "Tell it like it is" History Curriculum

The Battle for Control of our Schools Moral Curriculum by Liberals and Conservatives

The Evolution of the Moral Dialog in America's Schools The central themes of this book are: Values are a component of democratic thinking

Our track record on bringing values to light is dim

Divergent visions can coexist in conflict

Students have greater maturity in integrating complex values than many of their elders Keywords:

Critical Moral Education

Multicultural assumptions

Racial assumptions and attitudes

Political machinations

Political Right (as in direction, not correctness) Main Idea:

Democratic thought requires full exposure to divergent values

Submerged issues such as race, sex, politics and religion batter our schools

Courage and freedom to communicate bring undercurrents of thought, belief and cloaked action to light. Quotes: "While both moral and character education programs have existed in some form or other since the early days of common schooling, multicultural, antiracist, and conflict resolution programs are a more recent phenomena, the products of both the opportunities and tensions born of America's changing demographics and other social, cultural, and political trends. Multicultural curricula seek to sensitize students to the fact of cultural diversity by teaching about the histories and cultures of different ethnic groups. Antiracist curricula take the additional step of investigating the history of unequal power relationships among these groups. They seek to sharpen students' awareness of prejudice and bigotry and strengthen their resolve to act against them. Programs in conflict resolution and violence prevention help students find ways to resolve conflicts peacefully, without resorting to verbal or physical violence." (p. - 7)

"Instilling positive moral values in schoolchildren [sic] sounds good; raising engaged, socially responsible future citizens sounds even better. But these seemingly straightforward goals raise complex questions: What values are to be deemed positive? By whose authority are they promoted? How should they be taught in schools? What is their relation to the schools' many other functions and responsibilities?" (p. -

"I believe that arguing that schools should stick solely to the 'basics' is in fact a dodge. Conservative and New Right critics are not really against schools imparting moral and political values to students; they are simply against imparting values they consider 'wrong.' Their opposition to fostering critical moral thinking stems from their desire to impart their own values to young people--values they implicitly or explicitly claim are authentic, unchanging, and truly American." (p. - 9)

"The curriculum must provide opportunities for students to explore the practical applications of freedom, which they have learned demand constant struggle with difficult, controversial, and complex issues. The responsibility that citizens have for one another as neighbors and as nations cannot be left to others." (p. - 70)

"From my perspective, these classroom dynamics reveal tensions about conflicting values and ideologies among teachers, students and the Facing History curriculum itself, demonstrating the enormous complexity of the endeavor to catalyze critical, moral thinking among adolescent students." (p. - 70 & 71)

"These issues were fought out in the realm of education is not surprising, and that they took shape in conflicts over a particular curriculum is not without precedent. Over the years, numerous attempts have been made to recon with the place of social and moral values in the classroom. Whether approached as an explicit subject of the curriculum or embedded in the everyday dealings of students and teachers, American schools have long sought to nurture students' ability to know right from wrong, to care about their classmates and caretakers and to treat them with respect, in short to engage with the world by seeing themselves as responsible citizens, members of the human community. These teachings have always been hotly contested, for liberals and conservatives have often been in conflict over the place moral education should occupy within the school curriculum, which values schools should teach, and how they should do so." (p. - 102)

"Opponent of this kind of moral education in the classroom are by no means against responsible citizenship, and many would object to a characterization that pits them against the ideal of cultural tolerance and respect. They are a diverse group, and their reasons for opposing such curricula are consequently varied. Generally speaking, however, critics argue that moral values are by and large a private affair outside the purview of government. They feel that the responsibility of promoting moral growth lies with the home or the church, not the school. Moreover, they fear that the values promoted within the classroom may at times conflict with those encouraged in the home. Equally invested in advancing a particular understanding of American democracy, they contest the so-called liberal bias of these educational programs and charge that they undermine, rather than further, democratic aims. Fearing the construction of values promoted by liberals within the schools, critics argue against shared responsibility for moral growth. The urge schools to stick to a more limited intellectual terrain instead--for example, the old "basics" of reading, writing and arithmetic. (p. - 103 & 104) Issues Addressed by the Book: This book grapples with the issue of values as these attitudes, habits and beliefs are played out in the culture, religion and politics that impact students, often on a hidden way. The book also conveys a "liberal" bias that weaves a particular spin and slant on history, classroom observation and the emotional impact of the book.

The Book's Shortcomings:

The author tries to be too academic and even handed, and in doing so, weakens the book's documentary value.

The author spends lots of time relating intricate observations of students who grapple with these issues, but this style makes scanning for summaries and outlining the book's content cumbersome. It takes detective work to find out what side the author really is on.

Comments: This book would benefit from an action oriented, easier to read format. The long narrative passages would be easier to read if outline elements were identified with subheadings and formatting.

A newspaper, rather than literary style, would help busy teachers skim and scan the passages to find relevant passages (and possibly ignore the rest of the endless details). Summary: This is an important topic, and the examples are a bit dated. A conversation about this topic becomes really skewed when the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is seen as a thinly veiled attempt (by some forces) to promote voucher-based funding for religious schools.

Observing and describing student interactions (and confrontations) in exquisite detail, and cataloging the values-in-schools history falls short of providing the action-oriented, easy to read (i.e., scan) and easy to apply materials that busy teachers need. Busy teachers do not have the luxury of sifting through mountains of prose to mine gems of

wisdom, no matter how eloquent and insightful. Rating (Four Point scale): Useful - 2

Applicable - 2

Relevant - 3

Innovative - 1

Original - 2

Interesting - 2

Overall Rating - 2.0

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Book Review at 05:00

Site Strategy

Site Strategy and Progress

Work on our second ISO downloadable CD was set aside in favor of a competing project. Look for links to the second ISO CD next month in this "Site Strategy" category. Competing Project I volunteered to present a seminar for the University of Texas at San Antonio's (UTSA) Small Business Development Center. Check the November listing for a schedule and description of the seminar.

Originally, the proposal was to be directed toward assisting non-profit organizations in their Web design, Web development Web and project management. But the UTSA SBDC preferred that I gear the seminar project toward the issues that affect small business owners. Seminars Offer Inadequate Training Seminars offer the same limited learning opportunities that Classroom Toolkit addressed in our article on the Start of School In-Service program. See the July 2006 article, Professional Development: Fast-Track to Empowerment or an Energy-Sapping Seat-Time Rut So, this seminar was designed as a "Walk the Talk" demonstration of each of the concepts that will be addressed. The presentation itself is a "Website", except that the font sizes are large, making the results similar in appearance to a Microsoft®; PowerPoint slide show.

The Website style design makes the presentation a level of magnitude more flexible than a linear slide show.

Developing and fine tuning this presentation format was important since I plan to use the template for the workshop that I will be delivering for the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) conference in February 2007. Seminar Follow Up The other issue plaguing In-services, seminars and workshops is a lack of "follow up" learning activities.

This seminar addresses this issue in two ways: A handout CD with resources and tools that can be reviewed and studied after the seminar

An online, interactive tutorial system that reinforces the same attitudes, knowledge and skills that were presented in the seminar. The draft of the handout CD is online. Check for revisions on November 7 and again at the beginning of January 2007. (The seminar will be repeated again at that time.)

Link to the Building a Bodacious Web Presence Handout CD. The second follow up resource is the interactive, online tutorial. This tutorial uses the Moodle®; Open Source product.

View the framework for the seminar follow up at...

Link to the Building a Bodacious Web Presence follow up interactive, online tutorial. Time Consuming Tutorial Development

Course development experience with Moodle®; has led to a rethinking of the Classroom Toolkit position on teachers using this product for their classrooms.

Development work with Moodle®; is so time consuming that we now recommend that teachers do not create Moodle®; courses without first obtaining copyright and intellectual property rights guarantees in writing from their school district employer.

Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright Law

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is working to protect the intellectual property rights of university employees. But progress on this is slow because Universities want to grab all the intellectual property they can. (We live in an "Information Economy", after all. And information means money. Some Universities and School District executive management folks prefer that their organizations grab and hold the rights to this information, whether or not their organization had any involvement in the creation of that information, or whether or not the employee who created that information is ever compensated.

The AAUP argues that work-for-hire does not include faculty intellectual property. Federal court decisions, traditional academic practices, and notions of academic freedom all support the rights of faculty to retain ownership of their work as original authors. Source: <http://www.udel.edu/aaup/news/newsletters/2006/September.html>

Of course, the Kansas Supreme Court ruling stated that copyright ownership of university professor's intellectual property had to be determined on a "case by case basis."

Of course, this ruling was in Kansas and directed at the University Level, but shows promise that teachers may one day retain intellectual property rights.

However, before posting tutorials while in the employ of a school district, Classroom Toolkit recommends that you seek the counsel of your attorney for specific laws in the state where you work.

And, with the elections upon us, bringing this "intellectual property acquisition by fiat" loophole (i.e., organizations claiming intellectual property rights to your uncompensated work) to the attention of your elected officials could be a strategic move to protect your long-term rights.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Site Progress at 04:00

Open Source for Education

Donation Coder: Not Exactly Open Source...But a Great Deal for Teachers

Teachers like "Free". In fact, no cost is the only reasonable strategy that teachers have before dipping into their own pockets for necessities for their classrooms. And, you don't have to spend your own money at DonationCoder.Com. Every program available there is "Freeware." This means that you receive the full program, no time limits, no crippling restrictions.

What the folks at DonationCoder.Com do is ask that you register for the program that you download so that they can ask you for a donation.

You don't have to donate. But, if you pick up a program that saves you a lot of time, or provides other benefits, why not show a little (monetary) appreciation. Link to the Donation Coder Site Unusual Procedures In order to encourage people to really "consider" (think about more than half a second) donating, Donation Coder uses an unusual device. For people who don't donate:

The freeware license key will remove the "nag" from the program for six months.

After six months the "nag" reminder will come back and you have to return to the DonationCoder site page to create a new license key. The second key will last for another 6 months.

After one year (from your initial installation of the program) you can obtain a permanent "non-expiring" license key. Of course, if you choose to ignore the "nag" message, the software works perfectly from the time you download it to forever.

Seems more than fair. What Programs can you Get from DonationCoder.Com? There are hundreds of free programs, many that are geared for programmers. But, many can be adapted for classroom use.

For example...

Screen Shot Captor

Clipboard Help and Spell

Mobysaurus Thesaurus

Flipbook Printer

Google[®]; Translation Boomerang

Many more...see for yourself Other Benefits If you donate, you become eligible for the Donation Coder Specials and Discounts. You also become eligible for monthly software prizes.

Donation Coder.Com negotiates substantial discounts with software developers each month, and the selections and discounts are different each month.

But, donating \$2 and saving \$20 to \$40 for software is a pretty good trade.

Check out the DonationCoder.Com site, and see what incredible bargains you can find that will benefit your students.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Open Source at 03:00